

CHAPTER VIII

LAST DAYS OF PERSECUTION

IN a previous chapter we gave a brief account of the terrible sufferings inflicted upon the Church during the persecution which followed the edicts of Diocletian. They continued for many years almost without interruption, but with varying intensity. When, for example, Diocletian celebrated his Vicennialia a general amnesty was proclaimed which must have opened the prison doors to many thousands of Christians. Eusebius expressly states that the amnesty was for "all who were in prison the world over," and there is no hint that liberty was made conditional upon apostasy. None the less, it is certain that a great number of Christians were still kept in the cells—on the pretext that they were specially obnoxious to the civil power—by governors of strong anti-Christian bias. The sword of persecution was speedily resumed and wielded as vigorously as before down to the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian. Then came another lull. With Constantius as the senior Augustus the persecution came to an end in the West, and even in the East there was an interval of peace. For Maximin, who was soon to develop